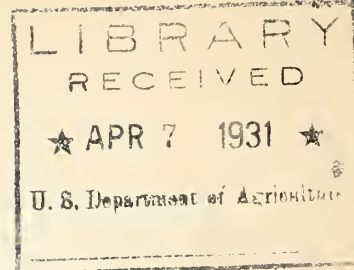


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PROPER USE OF LAND

A radio talk by H. N. Wheeler, Forest Service, delivered through WRC and 39 other radio stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company, March 23, 1931.

The wealth of a nation springs from its soil, but soil is being wasted everywhere. All land should be put to its highest use and made to produce the crop to which it is best suited. There may be minerals, gas, oil or coal under the surface, or the area may have a future real estate possibility, but first of all land must be handled according to its best surface usage.

We hardly know where we are headed in use of land. Like the negro woman who asked the ticket agent for a ticket for Magnolia. After searching for some time among the railroad folders, the agent asked: "Where is Magnolia?" Pointing to her little pickaninny says, "Dar she sets right over thar."

But the time has arrived when it is necessary to know the worth of our land and push a program for its best use. Until fairly recently it was supposed that all timbered land when cleared, would be used for agricultural purposes of some sort. Much land of marginal and submarginal type is not suited to raising farm crops, but all except the areas above timber line, rocky cliffs, and the swamp, marsh and desert areas will produce timber.

Some of these lands will grow timber for lumber, wood pulp or naval stores, while other areas may raise fence posts and fire wood, or even timber and brush, useful chiefly for protecting water-sheds, regulating stream flow and preventing erosion of soil. In general, land best suited to agricultural use should raise farm crops, fruit, truck, or livestock. And yet trees are so valuable for so many purposes, it may sometimes be best to grow forest trees even on good farming land.

The importance of proper land use in the United States becomes apparent when we know that out of the 1,900,000,000 acres of land in the country, only 344,000,000 acres were in farm crops and 407,000,000 acres in pasture in 1924. Part of the 75,000,000 acres of pasture land now wooded, and some farm lands now cultivated would bring better returns if used exclusively for timber production.

About one-third of the remaining 1,150,000,000 acres in the country is classified as timber land, but 100,000,000 acres or so of this is badly denuded, and another 80,000,000 acres growing inferior species, produce little commercial lumber. There are millions of acres of marsh, swamp and semi-arid land of questionable value for tree growth. But many millions more of marginal and sub-marginal land still cultivated at a loss or abandoned, lying idle, could and should grow timber, for land incapable of producing farm crops at a reasonable profit should be growing trees. No one can afford to pay taxes

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on land that does not bring in some financial return now or has a possible future enhanced value, and such lands are in many States becoming the property of States or counties, each year for non-payment of taxes. Tax adjustment is being made in some States so the private owner can afford to keep such land raising timber.

Trees are so essential to the life and happiness of man, that even if growing them for lumber, pulp wood, fence posts, fire wood, and other products, is not financially profitable, they are still worth all they cost in regulating stream flow and in preventing the washing away of the soil. Millions of acres of formerly timbered lands, cleared and cultivated, and millions not timbered but carelessly farmed have been so badly eroded as to be unfit for further use as agricultural land. These areas whether private or public should be planted to trees.

Forests furnish protection and food for wild life -- animals and birds -- that are so essential to man's well-being and pleasure that these otherwise idle acres can very properly be kept in timber at public expense.

Game refuges maintained in the public forests insure a constant supply of animals and birds to be seen by nature lovers or to supply stock to the adjoining hunting areas. Some States already reckon the worth of the wild life at more than \$1 per acre per year, and by proper handling, this value can be increased very greatly. The owner, whether private or public, under proper State law can regulate the taking of game or fur-bearing animals and birds on his own lands. If he feeds and properly protects the wild life on his place, he should have sufficient game to charge for hunting privileges, and might secure further income by acting as a guide, furnishing dogs, boats, and supplies.

Some lands not forested, or only partly so, inhabited by beaver, muskrats and other water animals and water fowl may bring a large return to the owner directly, or leased to trappers and hunters. Muskrat land may return from five to fifteen or more hides per acre per year.

Man, himself, is dependent upon the forests not only for wood products but because they regulate streams, lakes, springs, and wells, soften the blizzards of winter and the hot blasts of summer. Trees bring water by the root system, up the trunks and out through the leaves into the air where this water forms clouds and comes to earth again as rain.

Again, trees may be of great value for recreation purposes. In 1929, 31,750,000 people visited the national forests, while other millions enjoyed the National and State Parks and State Forests. For the most part, people seek recreation where there are trees and chances to camp in the cooling shade of the forest, the grove, or under some individual tree. Land properly timbered may be of greater value for recreation than for any other purpose. Resort owners often consider the big forest trees, about their places, worth ten to one hundred times more for their recreational value than for lumber production. The Government or State can very well afford to own and control forests for

public recreation for human beings need the forest to regain and maintain health, to restore shattered nerves, worn thin by present day business and social strain.

Fire is the great enemy of the forest, and it must be kept out if the woods are to be made to pay by any use whatever.

The many millions of wooded acres in the national forests, in national parks and on Indian reservations, besides millions in private ownership should be kept producing timber. The Great Plains and Prairie sections should grow part of their own wood supply. Sandy lands worth little for farming and of small value for grazing, can be made to produce timber profitably, besides rendering all the other services of watershed protection, climatic regulation, game protection and human recreation.

In all the area east of the Great Plains States lie 742,000,000 acres of land with but 324,000,000 acres in cultivation and in pasture leaving over 400,000,000 acres in neither crop nor pasture. The present forest service plans call for a total of 16,000,000 acres to be finally included in national forests in this region. The future demand may be such that 50,000,000 acres should become national forest land, and 50,000,000 acres more be incorporated in State, County and City Forests. Every reasonable encouragement should be given to private owners to make their timber lands continuously productive

When it comes to figuring the dollars and cents value of the woods bringing people back to health, for keeping them physically or mentally fit, or by their beauty, making life more worth-while, the money value is difficult to estimate.

Forests really mean life itself, for without them man cannot exist.. As Douglas Mallock has it:

"Get up in the timber, the trail and the trees,
Will make you a man in a day,
The smell of the soil and the breath of the breeze,
Will blow all your troubles away.
There is pine for you, wine for you, hope
For you there.
If the ways of the city are not on the square,
Get up in the woods where they are."

